

# PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW  
NOTES

Dover Quartet

Escher Quartet

Friday, November 1 – 7:30 PM

*Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center*

## **PROGRAM**

### **Quartet in D Major, Op. 25**

**Benjamin Britten**

*Born: November 22, 1913, in Lowestoft, England*

*Died: December 4, 1976, in Aldeburgh, England*

*Composed: 1941*

*Duration: 26 minutes*

In July 1941, while still in the States, Britten received a \$400 commission from an American patroness, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, which presented him with the opportunity to compose his 'official' String Quartet No 1. Mrs. Coolidge was a passionate devotee of the genre, and had already commissioned Bartók's Fifth Quartet (1934) and Schoenberg's Fourth (1936). Britten's contribution was composed in the humble surroundings of a tool shed located in the garden of Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson, the British husband-and-wife piano duo who were his hosts during a stay in California. The finished quartet was first performed in September 1941 in Los Angeles, and earned its composer the Library of Congress Coolidge Medal for Eminent Services to Chamber Music.

### **Quartet in A Minor**

**Fritz Kreisler**

*Born: February 2, 1875, in Vienna, Austria-Hungary*

*Died: January 29, 1962, in New York City, U.S.*

*Composed: 1919*

*Duration: 28 minutes*

Fritz Kreisler was born in 1875 in Vienna and died in New York City in 1962. He is remembered as one of the reigning violinists of his era but he was also a successful composer of considerable skill. His most famous compositions are his enchanting violin miniatures — *Caprice Viennois*, *Liebesfreud*, *Liebesleid*, *Schön Rosmarin*, *Tambourin Chinois* — but he also

wrote a string quartet, a violin concerto, two operettas (*Apple Blossoms and Sissy*), and cadenzas for concertos by Brahms, Mozart, and Beethoven. His String Quartet in A Minor, his most ambitious creation, was composed in New York in 1919 and first heard at a Bohemian Club dinner in honor of Alma Gluck and Efrem Zimbalist in that city. The composer said of this lyrical and harmonically ripe work, "This is my confession or avowal to Vienna, what that city meant to me, and my great love of the Viennese spirit."

### **String Octet, Op. 7**

**George Enescu**

*Born: August 19, 1881, in Iiveni, Romania*

*Died: May 4, 1955, in Paris, France*

*Composed: 1900*

*Duration: 39 minutes*

Enescu acknowledged that his String Octet, written when he was 19 years old, was a transitional work, coming as it did between his highly accomplished juvenilia (he had written four worthy "Study" Symphonies by the age of 16) and the first appearance of his mature voice. The experience of his early large-scale scores bears impressive fruit in the Octet, a work of nearly three-quarters of an hour in length, and one which exploits Enescu's mastery of counterpoint to the fullest. The opening movement presents no fewer than six themes which will form the basis of the entire work. In addition, there are other features that will recur, including the relentless, pulsing pedal point heard right at the outset, over which the first theme, with its characteristic descending major sixth, is sung unison by massed strings. This rhythmic pulse becomes the engine that drives the contrapuntal web spun by Enescu's eight players, each of which is treated as a full-fledged soloist. The texture is rich, often dense, and hyper-Romantic in feeling.